

IV.—*Additional notice on the geography of Cochinchina. By the most Rev. JEAN LOUIS, Bishop of Isauropolis.*

Although I have already given you a short account of the geography of *Cochinchina*, I think it is advisable to add a few more remarks because in the first place, I have recent intelligence from that country that various changes have taken place in the divisions or limits of the empire; and in the second place, because I have made,—and in some cases I have not made,—the consequent alterations in the map which I am about to publish.

The letters to which I have above alluded inform me that the kingdom of *Camboze*, henceforth will only have a local habitation and a name in our old maps. This kingdom so ancient, known in the Chinese annals by the name of *Chón lap* and of *Chiêm lap*, was originally designed by them under the name of *Phú nam*. From the fifth century and perhaps even before, it was divided into two parts, one named *Chiêm lap* (maritime). This part was the nearest to the sea and has the appearance of an immense lake. It is the division now known by the name of *Gia dint*, or the province of lower *Cochinchina*. The northern part which is very mountainous was called *Chiêm lap* ‘of earth’ (inland). This denomination ceased about the year 606 of the Christian era, when the general name of *Chiêm lap* or *Camboze* embraced the whole. This kingdom was bounded on the north by the kingdom of *Laos*, on the west by the kingdom of *Siam*, and on the south by the sea, for it is within the last century only that lower *Cochinchina* has formed one of its limits to the south, for the latter country was itself formerly one of the finest divisions of the *Camboze* kingdom. Its true limits were the mountains inhabited by savages called *Moi*, and those of the ancient kingdom of *Ciampa*. This country is situated in a long plain between two ranges of mountains on the east and west.

Camboze, from being one of the most flourishing kingdoms of Indo-China has undergone the same fate as all those great empires of Asia of which nothing remain but the name, while *Cochinchina* has been built upon its ruins. For a long period the king of *Camboze* was tributary to the kings of *Siam* and of *Cochinchina*. The king of *Siam* had taken all the country which bordered his kingdom to the west even as far as *Battambang*. The king of *Cochinchina* extended the limits of his dominion to *Chândoe*, a fortified place, situated on the canal of *Hà-tiên*, about three days’ journey from the capital of *Camboze*, named *Nam-vang*, by the Cochinchinese, *Penompeng* by the *Cambogiens*, from whence, the Europeans, who have a facility of corrupting names, have made *Columpé*.

The effeminate king of *Camboze* (he deserved this name for his escort was composed of nothing but women) for a long time found himself between two zealous protectors, who, while they were encroaching little by little on his dominions, were always feasting him with the titles of noble and powerful majesty. In a word, the situation of this phantom of a king resembled that of the unfortunate individual in the proverb who sitting between two stools soon found himself on the ground between them. The king of *Cochinchina* always placed near his majesty several mandareens to protect and direct his politics. For a long time this king had no male child, and although in that country the Salic law was not in existence, the Cochinchinese king only waited for the favorable moment to put into execution the project he had privately entertained for many years of adding to his kingdom what little still remained in the possession of the king of *Camboze*. About the end of 1835 or beginning of 1836 the king of *Camboze* died; immediately the king of *Cochinchina* gave the daughter of the defunct monarch in marriage to a Cochinchinese mandareen and proclaimed NAM VANG one of the protectors of the empire of *Annam*, and also of the country in the vicinity of the sea, under the title of Protector (prefect?) of *Gòsat*. In order not to terrify the neighbouring kings and principally so as not to excite the jealousy of the king of *Siam*, the *Cochinchinese* king gave the title of Nu Vuong, that is to say Queen, to the Princess of *Camboze*. If I were asked to say in which kingdom she reigns, as all her dominions have been added to the *Cochinchinese* prefecture? I should answer that I do not know; but in the same manner as small bones are given to amuse children, so sometimes fine titles are given to amuse grown up people. These are my reasons for having only placed the name of *Camboze* in my map and reduced the country into prefectures.

This is what I have done:—now what I have not done is the changing of *Nam Vang* the capital. Has it changed its place? Certainly, and what to us appears so extraordinary is not so to those who know the customs and superstitions of the Indians and of the Indo-chinese. In your journal for September 1837, it strikes me that I gave the reasons for these different changes. About the end of December 1833, this town of *Nam Vang* was entirely destroyed by the Siamese. The king of *Camboze* has had another town built at a short distance from the former one, and on the opposite bank of the same river, but being ignorant of its right position I have not altered it. I may say as much regarding the position of *Saigòn*, in lower *Cochinchina*;—it is no longer in its ancient place. Some day looking at this map, people will say that there are mistakes, but these errors are known and announced so as to enable

persons who visit these parts to rectify the same. In drawing the map of this country I am guided merely by the interests of science and must openly say what I think of the work, and of the ameliorations or changes that I have thought proper to make.

One of the most essential alterations and which I had the greatest hesitation in adopting, was—what do you think?—to change the course of one of the finest and largest rivers in Asia. The present map is altogether different in this respect from the ancient ones. In all the European maps this great river of *Laos* is represented throughout the whole of its course as strait as an arrow until it reaches *Cochinchina*. I think it a decided mistake; I will give you my reasons for thinking so. I was always persuaded that in regard to a geographical map, the same rule holds as for a geographical dictionary;—one copies the maps of another and enlarges it more or less, and adds a few more names, and it is lucky if in thus copying the errors are not augmented. The geographical dictionary of *VOSGIEN* offers an example. For his day it was a very good work; since then new editions have been made, enriched, augmented, improved, &c. and nevertheless the greater part of the original mistakes still remain, and what was really the case in the time of *VOSGIEN*, but has disappeared within the last 50 or 60 years, is not corrected: v. g. the town of *Chandernagore* is always the same;—it is said that a great quantity of velvet, silk, brocades, saltpetre, &c. are bought and sold there: I could give further examples of this, but it would be superfluous.

I return again to the geographical map of *Cochinchina*. I have given to the river which flows through *Laos* a course quite different from that in all the other maps, because the two maps I had with me drawn by engineers of the country gave it this direction. They know the country, they visit it every day and have measured all the windings of the river *Laos* which is also called *Meykon* or *Mecon*. To lay down interior of *Camboge*, *Laos* and a part of *Thon-king*, I have used an ancient and a modern map of the country designed by his majesty's engineers; for the coast I have used a map made by Mr. *D'AYOT*, a French officer, formerly in the service of his majesty the emperor of *Cochinchina*. I think it the best map for the coasts that I have as yet seen: in truth no one had such a good opportunity, for Mr. *D'AYOT*'s occupations obliging him often to pass and repass this shore, he could make his observations and rectify them often. The knowledge I have had of the greater part of the places of the interior of *Cochinchina* properly called has greatly aided me in placing them on this map. You would probably wish to know if any confidence is to be placed in the map made by these

been of great use, had he been able to have come down the *Mekong* river from the 18th degree to the 11th of latitude north. But let us hope that what is delayed, is not altogether lost. Captain MACLEOD has opened and cleared the road. Under the présent circumstances it appears to me to be the best and only route to be taken; as neither the Siamese nor Cochinchinese will allow Europeans to enter their country to go and visit *Laos*, and much less to prepare instruments to make observations with.

About the year 1770, Mr. LEVAVASSEUR, a missionary at *Camboge*, well acquainted with the different localities, informs us; "that the town of *Columpé*, which some geographers have placed on the western branch of the *Mécon*, is in reality very near to this river, but on another river nearly as large which flows from a large lake from *Camboge*, and after passing *Columpé* enters the *Mécon*." The same person in another place says "after passing *Columpé* we soon arrived at the place, where the river, which flows past the royal town, enters the *Mécon*." Here the bishop of *Canathe* remarked to me that the river that enters *Cochinchina* is one of the branches of the great river, which after having been subdivided in *Cochinchina* enters the sea at two different places; adding to these two the mouth of the *Bassac* is the cause of geographers saying that the *Mécon* enters the sea at three different places: it is as well to add that the ancient geographers made no mistake in placing the three mouths of the *Mécon* in the *Camboge*, for in former days this kingdom extended as far. (*Nouvelles lettres edifiantes*, tom. VI.)

In the days of this missionary, the dominions of the king of *Cochinchina* did not extend so far as the country watered by the western branch of the *Mécon*. It is surprising that the greater part of our geographers have not profited by these observations, and that the route traced out by the ancient geographers should still be followed without trying to amend it. MALTEBRUN says that one can only guess at the right situation of *Lac-thô* which a recent traveller says is situated to the north of *Laos*, between *Tong-kin* and *China*. I have tried to find its situation and I think I have succeeded. From the narrative of the missionaries, this country of *Lac-thô*, which is nothing more than a canton, contains about 1500 inhabitants, and is situated at the extremity of *Tong-kin* towards the west, is dependent of the province of *Thanh-hoa-mgoai*, and is situated on the borders of the provinces of *Hưng-hóa* of *Soutáy* or *Doài* and of *Nam-thường*. I think MALTEBRUN was wrong in only seeing in the *Lac-thô*, the *Laos* by the Chinese name of *Lac-tchoue*.

At present a large country is designated by the name of the kingdom of *Laos*, or more properly *Lao*, because a number of towns or small states bear that name. For instance in the Cochinchinese map there is a great kingdom called *Lao long*; its capital town is near the river, called *Mécon* when it approaches *Camboge*; but near the capital itself this river bears the name of *Ciu long giang*, which signifies, the river of the nine dragons. I think that from the word *Lao long*, the extent of country situated between two chains of mountains and watered by this great river has been called *Lao*. I was unable to place in my map this town of *Lao long* as it appears to be between the first and second degrees of longitude east and about the 22nd of latitude north. I was surprised at not finding this capital in Mr. MACLEOD's map. MALTEBRUN and many others have placed the source of this river in the province of *Yun-nam* in *China*. But I am persuaded that this river flows from the mountains of *Thibet*. In a short time I have no doubt that we shall obtain proof of what I have advanced. It is indicated in the map of *Cochinchina* and the extraordinary inundation of this river about the month of September proves also, that the melting of the ice of *Thibet*, is the cause of its overflowing its banks and spreading its waters over *Camboge* and lower *Cochinchina*, and causing the same fertility as the *Nile* does in *Egypt*. What MALTEBRUN speaks of a traveller having arrived at *Laos* from *China* by descending one of the rivers and crossing a lake, does not prove that the *Camboge* river has its source in *China*; this on the contrary accords exactly with the Cochinchinese map; about the 23rd or 24th degree of latitude one of the rivers, which flows from the mountains of *Ligum-nam*, enters the great river of *Camboge*. This Portuguese traveller must have taken the junction of these two rivers for a lake.

The Dutch ambassador, GERARD VAN WUTHOF visited *Laos* in 1641, and if we exclude LE MARINI whose works I was unable to procure, it is to the Dutch we are indebted for what little we know of *Laos*. They embarked on board small boats at *Camboge*, and were eleven weeks reaching *Viénchau*, the capital of one of the states of *Laos*. In the Cochinchinese map this town is called *Bàn chau*, but the Siamese call it *Vien chau* and I think this its real name. I do not know why some geographers call it *Lanchaing* or *Luntchung*, others *Langyone* which is not a bit better. Others have at a short distance from *Vien chau* added the town of *Sandepara*; I have not mentioned this place because I could find no trace of it in any of my maps. The greater number of the small kingdoms composing the country of *Laos* I have included in the Cochinchinese empire, because I think them all

tributary to that empire. Some pay their tribute in gold, musk, gum, lac, &c.; others again in elephants' teeth, rhinoceros' horns, skins of deer and other animals, aromatic gums, &c. The Cochinchinese sell their silks, but salt is the most profitable substance; formerly this commodity used to be sold for its weight in gold.

The language and customs of the country of *Laos* resemble in a great measure those of *Siam* and *Camboge*. The religion of Buddha is in the same state of veneration as in these two countries, but a few changes have been introduced by the Bonzes. There are in this country a number of idols and Bonzes; one scarcely finds a village without them. Near the residence of the princes there is generally a magnificent temple and a gilt idol of an enormous size. Each prince as he succeeds to the throne has it re-gilt. The custom of burning the dead bodies near it is still kept up, and of preserving the ashes in an earthen vase placed in the temple of the idol. Their Bonzes have however broken the law of abstinence; they leave this part of the rites to their brethren, while they themselves eat indifferently all sorts of meat. They themselves have ordained that they may marry; this is not allowed in *Camboge* of *Siam* and *Cochinchina*, where if they do not wish to remain in celibacy they are obliged to quit the pagoda.

The Dutch who ascended the *Camboge* river on their way to *Láo*, found this river very broad in some places and very narrow and full of rocks in others. The most remarkable places they saw were *Loim*, *Gockelok*, *Looim*, *Simpou*, *Sombok*, *Sombabour*, and *Baatsiong*. Out of the whole of these I only meet with *Sombok* and *Sombabour* which were formerly towns of *Camboge*. I have not placed either of them in my map, because in the last century the frequent civil wars have caused great ravages, and the constant incursions of the Cochinchinese and principally those of the Siamese have ruined many towns and changed the face of the whole country. A great number of the inhabitants were killed; others again were taken into captivity. The Cochinchinese seeing that a part of these territories was uncultivated, advanced little by little to cultivate a land, the fertility of which was surprising, and at last ended by being the only masters of this part.

The empire of *Anamite*, which at its origin, was nothing more than a small state has become a vast and powerful empire by the conquest of *Ciampee* of *Tong-king* and of *Camboge*; this empire might be compared at its foundation to a small rivulet that becomes larger as different streams enter it. If the geography of this country and of its neighbouring kingdoms has become obscure, it is not, as MALTEBRUN says, from its having been treated of by numerous writers who contradict each other,

but owing to the numerous changes that have taken place in consequence of fresh conquests and usurpations. A scientific and clever traveller who would penetrate into these vast and almost unknown countries would render a great service to science.

V.—*On the Reg-Ruwan or moving sand, a singular phenomenon of sound near Cabúl with a sketch. By Capt. ALEX. BURNES.*

In the vicinity of *Cabúl* there is a phenomenon similar to what occurs at *Jabal Nakous*, or the sounding mountain, near *Tor* in the Red Sea. It is called *Reg-Ruwan* or the moving sand, and is thus described by the emperor *BABER*. "Between these plains there is a small hill in which there is a line of sandy ground, reaching from the top to the bottom of the hill. They called it *Khwája Reg-Ruwan*. They say that in the summer season the sound of drums and nagarets issues from this sand." The place has been seldom visited, being in the *Kohistan* or troubled part of the country, but the power of the present chief of *Cabúl* has subdued the rebellious tribes near, and an opportunity was thus afforded us of visiting it, which we did in October last.

The description of *BABER* above given, though it appears marvellous, is accurate; *Reg-Ruwan* is about forty miles north of *Cabúl* towards *Hindu, kosh* and near the base of the mountains. Two ridges of hills, detached from the rest, run in and meet each other; at the apex of this, a sheet of sand, as pure as that on the sea shore, with a slope of about 40° , forms the face of a hill to its summit, which is about 400 feet high. When this sand is set in motion by a body of people, who slide down it, a sound is emitted. On the first trial we distinctly heard two loud, hollow sounds such as would be given by a large drum. On two subsequent attempts we heard nothing, so that perhaps the sand requires to be for a time settled before the curiosity is displayed. There is an echo in the place, and the inhabitants have a belief that the sounds are only heard on Friday when the saint of *Reg-Ruwan*, who is interred hard by, permits! The locality of the sand is remarkable, there being none other in the neighbourhood. *Reg-Ruwan* faces the south but the wind of *Purwan* (*badi Purwan*) blows from the north for the greater part of the year, and has probably deposited it by an eddy. Such is the violence of this wind that all the trees in the neighbourhood bend to the south, and a field, after a few years, requires to be recleared of the pebbles and stones which the loss of soil lays bare. The mountains here are generally composed of granite or mica, but at *Reg-Ruwan* we had sandstone, lime, slate and quartz.